SUMMER 2006

SEA & SHORE

The Navy and Marine Corps Magazine for Afloat and Shore Safety

Hurdling Into the *Critical Days* of Summer

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Vol. 8, No. 3, 2006

Mishaps waste our time and resources. They take our Sailors, Marines and civilian employees away from their units and workplaces and put them in hospitals, wheelchairs and coffins. Mishaps ruin equipment and weapons. They diminish our readiness. This magazine's goal is to help make sure that personnel can devote their time and energy to the mission, and that any losses are due to enemy action, not to our own errors, shortcuts or failure to manage risk. We believe there is only one way to do any task: the way that follows the rules and takes precautions against hazards. Combat is dangerous and demanding enough; the time to learn to do a job right is before combat starts.

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FEAT

URES

Departments

Front Cover

Naval Academy junior Kirsten Andrews runs the 55-meter hurdles. *USNA photo by Phil Hoffmann.*

Cover graphics by Jeff Hobrath of KR Systems, Inc. (krsystems.com)

Letter to the Editor

Re: "Ride to IBR Stops Short in 'Show Me' State," spring 2006

VADM Arthur's assertion that, "There was no way to anticipate, prevent or mitigate this crash... except to stay home," would be true only if the car he collided with had dropped out of the sky onto a straight, level road right in front of him. Instead, he was passing another vehicle, on a blind hill, at 65 mph, confident the roadway on the other side would be intact and unobstructed. In doing this, he ignored an unforgiving axiom of motorcycling: "Around every blind curve and over every blind hill the road is either not there or occupied by something nasty."

Beyond the crest of the hill, which was the limit of his forward vision, any number of "nasties" could have been waiting—dead cows, overturned tractor-trailers, rocks—every rider has a list of unpleasant surprises. VADM Arthur shouldn't deceive himself—his crash was due to an error in judgment, one all of us have made at one time or another, frequently to our peril and pain.

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[This letter writer is a former Maryland motorcycle-safety-program instructor and licensed motorcyclist since 1962.—Ed.]

"24/7—Operation Summer Force Preservation"

That's the name of a new outreach campaign developed by the Navy and Marine Corps safety team to remind Sailors and Marines of their responsibility to be alert, aware and able to manage risk all day, every day, now that the "Critical Days of Summer" have arrived. The Memorial Day weekend traditionally signals the beginning of summer activities, such as picnics, beach parties, and travel. The 24/7 campaign encourages Sailors, Marines and civilians to take care of each other and to make the summer season enjoyable.

The "Critical Days" pose greater risks for several reasons. It's when service members go on family vacations and travel longer periods than they should without rest or a break. It's when the weather is ideal for outdoor and water activities. And, it's also a time for cookouts and picnics, many times including alcohol consumption. Between the summers of 2002 and 2005, we lost 220 Sailors and Marines, 166 to PMV crashes. Seventy-three percent of these victims were between 18 and 26 years old.

The Naval Safety Center website (www.safetycenter.navy.mil/seasonal/criticaldays/) offers the 24/7 planner, containing materials to help safety leaders focus their efforts. Besides the planner, you can download a media kit and multimedia resources. We urge you to use these materials and develop your own local campaign.

WESS Improvements Underway

The WESS BRT (barrier removal team) has been listening to fleet feedback and is working on several initiatives to make the system better. A list of common-problem areas is available on the Naval Safety Center website at http://www.safetycenter.navy.mil/articles/n-z/WESS BRT_tackling.htm. Visit the site to find simple answers to common questions or to check what might help make your WESS experience better or to see if an issue you're having already is being reviewed.

It's Time To Turn the Tide

As I look at the spiraling number of deaths this fiscal year *[see accompanying charts]* among our young Sailors and Marines as the result of PMV mishaps, I can't help wondering what it's going to take to stop all this carnage. Here's what I'm talking about:

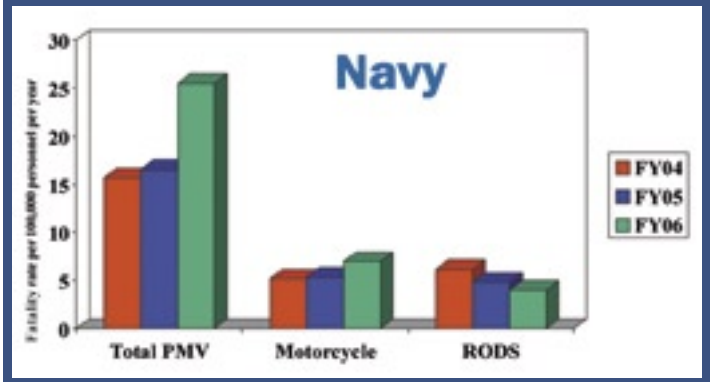
• A 24-year-old and a 20-year-old go out in the former's 2002 Ford Mustang and visit several drinking establishments over a two-day period. Then, while returning from their toot, they're traveling a state highway, approaching a railroad crossing, where a train happens to be passing. Warning signals are sounding and flashing everywhere. Neither really is paying attention, though. Why? Because they're both busy jackin' their jaws on cellphones. Then, to add a little more distraction, a bowling ball rolls off the rear seat and hits the front-center console, causing both to turn back and reach for the ball. By now, it's the 11th hour, and the 24-year-old driver suddenly realizes he has to do something to avoid hitting the train. He swerves sharply, but, alas, the train takes out the whole right side of the Mustang—killing the 20-year-old passenger. The unscathed driver blows a 0.123 BAC on the scene, has to complete a 28-day drug-and-alcohol-rehabilitation program, and, at last report, was waiting for the state to file charges against him for intoxicated manslaughter. It seems reasonable to me that his already traumatized condition is likely to get a lot worse before it gets any better. Wouldn't you agree?

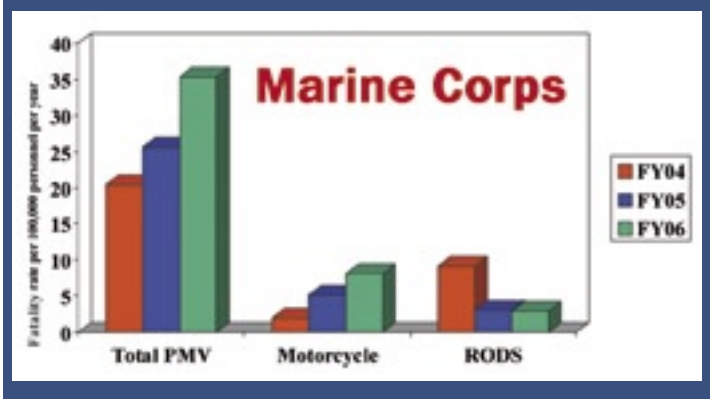
• Then, there's this tale about a 23-year-old and his roommate who have been at a friend's house, relaxing and drinking. When the 23-year-old decides it's time to leave, his roommate and other friends try to stop him. He rebuffs them, though, and rides away on his 2001 Honda CBR600. About 2330, he's headed toward home when he tries—but fails, "thanks" in part to a 0.24 BAC—to make a sharp right turn. Instead, he hits a concrete drainage ditch and is killed instantly, with five days passing before anyone finds his body—a sad commentary to someone considered to be "a strong performer with a bright future in the Navy."

While you're feeling sorry for these victims, don't forget all the other

Where We Stand

Year-to-Date Comparison Through April 18





people involved, starting with families and friends. And how about the firemen, paramedics, law-enforcement personnel, tow-truck drivers, and emergency-room staffs? They're affected, too. As one former firefighter/EMT turned naval aviator described to me, the memories of drinking-and-driving tragedies don't disappear very quickly. "My nightmares lasted for several years," he said.

Given these facts, I simply find it difficult to understand why our young Sailors and Marines keep making the wrong choices. Why drink and drive when such no-brainer alternatives exist (e.g., using a designated driver or taking a taxi)? If you see others preparing to drive—or ride—after drinking too much, do everything you can to stop them. If you can't stop them, immediately call the police. You'll be doing them and everyone else on the roads a favor; and, if that call costs a friendship, you'll still have the satisfaction of knowing you did the right thing.

I also urge you to take a look at some of the best practices for traffic and preventing alcohol-related incidents and DUIs that are available on our website. Go to http://www.safetycenter.navy.mil/bestpractices/ashore/default.htm.

RADM George Mayer

Editorial

Legal Drinking Age—The War Rages On

By Ken Testorff,
Naval Safety Center

Military officials have waged a long, hard, uphill battle to stem the problem of underage drinking. Their efforts to keep the minimum age for active-duty members at 21 are hampered by those who advocate an "old enough to bear arms, old enough to drink" philosophy. Here's what some current and former service members have to say:

• *I believe anyone who is packing a rifle for his/her country should have ALL the rights and privileges the country offers. Teenage girls can get abortions without parental consent. Teenage boys and girls can get married, but they can't have a legal bottle of beer. Where are our priorities?*

• *Either the drinking age should come down, or the enlistment age should go up.*

• *Beer is part of who we are as a nation. Let these kids indulge if they so choose. However, make them aware that if they screw up, they will pay the price.* [Unfortunately, the families also pay a price, and theirs don't end at a loved one's burial site.]

• *Mature enough to make the decision to enlist, mature enough to make the decision to drink. It's absurd to expect our personnel to sacrifice without entrusting them with responsibility.*

• *I feel that anyone who signs up to put his life on the line for this country should do so with all the privileges and rights—that includes getting sloshed.*

Then, there are these comments:

When I first joined the service at 18, I felt the drinking age was unfair. Over the years, though, I've seen too many young service people get in trouble with alcohol, and I believe that lowering the age limit only would make it easier for them to get in more trouble. Drinking alcohol takes a certain amount of maturity that you just don't get from being trained by the military and being old enough to put your life on the line. Going out drinking is not a military function and isn't done in a controlled environment. I wouldn't have a problem with a command serving alcohol at a unit party, where someone is accountable for how much is served and who can or can't drive. Maybe

you consider me a party pooper, but I take care of my people, and I feel good about that.

Without accountability, you end up with tragedies like these:

• A 22-year-old Marine lance corporal was operating a vehicle with his brother as the lone passenger. While trying to make a turn, the lance corporal hit a guardrail, killing his brother. Police arrested the Marine on charges of vehicular manslaughter and operating a vehicle with a BAC of 0.12.

• A 23-year-old Navy GSMFN, two shipmates, and a friend from another ship had spent the day drinking at a Tijuana bar. Finally, the GSMFN and one of his buddies had had enough and decided to return to their ship. While riding the trolley out of town, the GSMFN became sick and started vomiting, so he and the buddy got off the trolley. An argument ensued between the two Sailors and ended with the GSMFN running north on the trolley tracks. The liberty buddy boarded the next northbound trolley, which hit and killed the GSMFN.

• After standing six hours of continuous duty in a ship's main-machinery room, a 20-year-old Navy FN departed the brow with a 12-hour liberty pass. Nine hours and who-knows-how-many-drinks later, passersby found the FN after he had fallen from one of the balconies (no one knows which one) in a nine-story building. Interviews with shipmates who had been with the victim up until two hours before his fall indicated he had consumed at least 10 alcoholic beverages in a span of 6.5 hours. All of the drinks ranged from 12 to 20 fluid ounces and had a 5-to-7-percent alcohol content (malt liquor and wine).

• Marines at one base had an unsanctioned tradition of performing a memorable, unprofessional act on their last post *[equivalent of a Navy watch]* at that command. A certain lance corporal, who just had turned 21, knew about the tradition and vowed to friends that he would do "something crazy" on his final night of duty. With a bottle of whiskey to keep him company, the young lance corporal assumed his solo "last post." The safety-investigation report says that, while on duty and with another young, unwary Marine watching, the lance corporal tried a "trick" he had learned with a loaded 9 mm pistol. The trick failed, and the lance corporal shot himself dead—with a BAC of 0.14.

It was inevitable that something bad was going to happen at this command, given the deplorable supervisory conditions, which the report also went on to discuss at length. It described the "improper supervision" that evening as a "trend for the entire command." Marines routinely posted and relieved the watch without supervision and were instructed to log in inspections of their post on each hour, even if the COG (corporal of the guard) or SOG (sergeant of the guard) didn't do the inspections.

One other factor that needs to be considered here is the results of an ongoing National Institutes of Health (NIH) study. Led by Jay Giedd, a pediatric psychiatrist, researchers have found that the highest levels of physical and brain maturity aren't reached at age 18, as they had thought. Instead, one usu-

ally doesn't reach maturity until about age 25.

These findings, according to Giedd, imply that many life choices—college and career, marriage, and military service—often are made before the brain's decision-making center comes fully online.

Perhaps these findings also help explain why young people in general and underage youth in particular engage in more reckless behavior when they drink. As reported by the national MADD organization, 15-to-20-year-olds *[who, according to the World Almanac, comprise roughly 8 percent of the U.S. population]* accounted for 35 percent of the alcohol-related traffic crashes nationwide in 2002 and 36 percent in 2003.

Navy statistics for underage personnel are equally disturbing. In FY03, NADAP (Navy Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention) officials at the Navy Personnel Command reported that just under half of the Navy's alcohol-related fatalities were 20- and 21-year-old Sailors. Expand the scope to Sailors age 20 through 22, the highest risk group, and that number shoots to nearly 55 percent. Thus, a group that represents less than 20 percent of all personnel made up more than half the alcohol fatalities in FY03.

This number, though higher than normal, isn't an aberration. In FY02, 20- through 22-year-old Sailors accounted for 50 percent of the Navy's alcohol fatalities. The percentage was identical for FY01. Sailors 20 and under made up nearly half of alcohol fatalities in FY00.

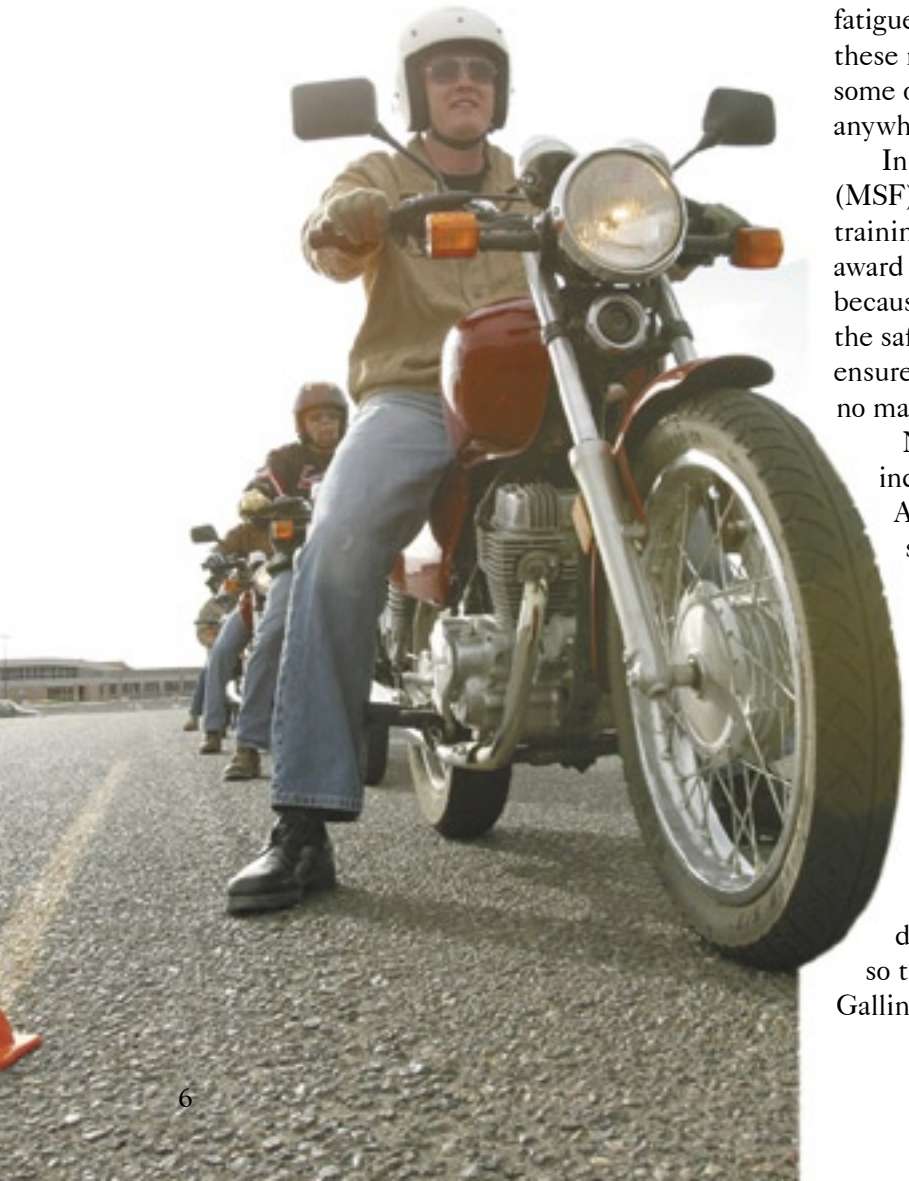
These numbers would seem to indicate that our young military folks really aren't "bulletproof" after all, even though many of them like to think so. Perhaps it's time to reevaluate, among other things, the nation's drinking laws and, instead of trying to find ways to water them down, to put more teeth in them. It isn't about restricting any rights or privileges to deny "too young" Sailors and Marines a bottle of booze; it's a matter of protecting them from themselves and their own immaturity. We owe nothing less to the families of these people because they go on hurting long after a loved one is gone.

My gut tells me people old enough to be sent into harm's way for their country should be able to drink legally, but the statistics make a pretty clear case to the contrary. I recently saw some figures that show the lower the drinking age, the earlier illegal drinking starts among youth. And, the earlier people start drinking, the more likely it is they will have lifelong alcohol problems. Studies in other countries, where children allegedly are taught "how to drink" at an early age, bear out this fact.—Chuck Roberts, head, traffic & off-duty recreation safety division

BRAVO Zulu

MSF Honors NAS Fallon's Motorcycle Training

By JO2(SW/AW) Sara Omo,
NAS Fallon Public Affairs



Naval Safety Center records for FY06 show that, as of May 12, 2006, motorcycle crashes have killed 17 Sailors and nine Marines. Common factors are speed, aggressive driving, and fatigue. Among those spearheading efforts to reduce these numbers is NAS Fallon, Nev., which provides some of the best motorcycle-safety training available anywhere in the Navy.

In June 2005, the Motorcycle Safety Foundation (MSF) recognized NAS Fallon's motorcycle-safety-training program with an "outstanding" award. This award was based on the command's uniqueness because of locality, its contract with the state, and the safety-office staff's commitment to manage and ensure the training program is provided to everyone, no matter what.

NAS Fallon's motorcycle-safety-training program includes two courses. As explained by Sharon Alexander, an occupational health and safety specialist at the base, "Our basic course provides the fundamentals for safe riding, and our experienced rider's course serves as a refresher or way to improve your skills."

The basic course is 20 to 24 hours long; it begins on Friday evenings and ends Sunday afternoons. Full-day sessions last about eight hours and involve classroom and field exercises on a specific course laid out in a large parking lot on base. "This course is designed to teach the basic fundamentals and to help develop the capabilities of motorcycle operators so they can be safe motorcyclists," said AO1 Rex Gallino, a RiderCoach instructor. "The riders learn

both the physical and mental skills that are imperative for operating a motorcycle. They also learn how to manage risk. My goal is to help them develop good mental riding strategies."

The classes usually are limited to 11 students, and the availability of the course depends on the rule of supply and demand. "We try our best to give everyone a chance to take this course," said Alexander. "We do have certain requirements, though. First, anyone on base interested in taking the course must be pre-screened to determine priority to attend the course. Second, all students are required to have a valid license with a motorcycle certification (M/C) endorsement or a valid license with an M/C learner's permit."

Students who have a learner's permit and successfully complete the course may present their Motorcycle Rider's Course certificate to Nevada's Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) and receive a full M/C endorsement after paying a fee. "Most students who enroll in this class possess at least a learner's permit," said Alexander. "Those who don't have an M/C endorsement or an M/C learner's permit still may take the class, but they do so at their own expense."

The course is free to military and DoD civilians attached to NAS Fallon through a contract with the State of Nevada, office of traffic safety, motorcycle-safety program. Civilians from the surrounding area also may enroll. "Because NAS Fallon is located in a remote area, it's ideal for civilians from many different areas to receive training here," said Alexander.

While military and DoD motorcycle operators (those who possess a motorcycle and know the basics of riding one) have top priority for the class, it's also available to those who don't even own a motorcycle. "I call these folks the 'wannabes,'" said Alexander. "They're people who are thinking about buying a motorcycle or just are interested in the course itself." The State of Nevada provides the motorcycles and supplies.

Instructors include four military and DoD civilians who have successfully completed the MSF's RiderCourse RiderCoach Preparation Course and have gone through nine days of intensive training. "These instructors are the backbone of the Motorcycle Safety Course," said Alexander. "They are committed and do a really good job of teaching students and ensuring they receive the best training possible."

Instructors are required to be licensed motorcyclists who ride on a frequent basis. They also must have several years of experience, and their DMV traffic record has to be clean. Why do people sign up to teach the course on a volunteer basis? For RiderCoach Gallino, who teaches the basic course, it was to share some of his 24 years of riding experiences with fellow riders. "I love to take beginners and teach them what it takes to safely operate a motorcycle for the first time and then watch their excitement as they learn those skills," he said.

Recognition of their motorcycle-safety-training program hasn't stopped NAS Fallon from continuing their quest for excellence. The base is committed to preventing motorcycle crashes along Nevada's stretches of long, empty highways and making the roads safer for riders and motorists alike.

Another Typical Day... Working 100 Feet in the Air

By Naval Surface Warfare Center,
Port Hueneme Division,
Command Communications Office

Training new personnel is one of those things in life that provides great personal satisfaction. Being able to take something you were taught and then pass that knowledge on to another person can give a feeling of accomplishment. That's what happened last year for Stevan Lopez III of the sensor network engineering branch in the air dominance department at Naval Surface Warfare Center, Port Hueneme Division (NSWC PHD).

The Port Hueneme Division provides in-service engineering and logistics support for combat systems installed on naval surface ships. This mission requires members of the command to travel to ships and perform maintenance, install new equipment, or upgrade existing equipment.

In May 2005, Lopez, a senior installation engineer with 11 years' experience at the command, was at Naval Station Norfolk with fellow command member Andy Malec, also an engineer. Their task was to perform an engineering-change installation on the cooperative-engagement-capability (CEC) equipment on board USS *Wasp* (LHD-1). Malec was relatively new to Port Hueneme, with just over two years' experience, and this field assignment was one of his first jobs working aboard ships.

The engineering-change installation required working aloft on the mast of *Wasp*—at the O-10 level, about 100 feet above the main deck. All the proper safety procedures were followed. A working-aloft chit was processed, the required equipment was tagged out, and the necessary words were passed over the ship's announcing system. A ship's-force escort led the installation team, and a safety observer took his post on deck to observe the workers.

Because Malec was new to working aloft, the veteran Lopez explained the purposes of the safety harness and lines and showed him how to wear the gear—just as other command members had trained

Andy Malec (left) and Stevan Lopez III wore the safety harnesses shown here during the engineering-change installation aboard USS *Wasp* (LHD-1).

Lopez when he was starting out. Here's the way Lopez described the events of that day in May:

"I took Andy up the mast of LHD-1 with me that day to do EC-USG2-038, along with Petty Officer Weber from the ship. We went up the last ladder (10 feet tall), facing the aft portion of the CEC CAAA (conical active aperture array) on about the O-10 level. Petty Officer Weber went up first and around the front, clockwise on the O-ring maintenance platform. I went up second and counterclockwise around the O-ring maintenance platform.

"To go counterclockwise, I had to cross over a 6-foot ladder leading to the tactical air navigation (TACAN) system. My two safety lines were attached to each side of the ladder. To cross over, I had to hold on to the TACAN ladder. The top two pins of this ladder were not secured in position, which allowed the ladder to separate and swing out from the platform, with me along for the ride.

"If not for my Ninja-like reflexes, I would have gone skydiving without a parachute. Fortunately, I noticed the SMQ-11 (shipboard receiving terminal antenna) below. It broke my fall but now bears the prints of a pair of Marine-size 8W combat boots.

"The funny thing about this bit of excitement in an otherwise typical day was that Andy subsequently tied himself off and held on white-knuckled every inch of the way afterward. Nice way to break in the new guy, huh?"

With the installation completed successfully and everyone safely back on deck, Lopez contacted NSWC PHD to tell his supervisor, Ken Harris, about the incident. Petty Officer Weber, meanwhile, notified his CPO and the CSOOW (combat systems officer of the watch) so repairs could be made to the unsecured ladder.

Harris recognized Lopez' dedication to safety. "Stevan followed all the safety requirements before and during the work and, even after the incident, still had the composure to accomplish the mission and then report the event back to the command."

Lopez credits his senior installation engineers and technicians with emphasizing the importance of having the proper safety equipment. It was because of this training that he was able to show Malec the value of having a safety harness without having to experience a fall.

"You hear a lot about safety requirements," said Malec, "but to see the benefits firsthand really drives the point home. I definitely learned to follow all the rules and to ensure other team members do, too. Hopefully, when I'm a team lead, I'll be able to reinforce the safety rules without another demonstration like Stevan gave me."

Commander, NSWC PHD, Capt. Steve Huber, recognized Lopez and Malec with a command coin, which he presented during an all-hands ceremony. "Safety is my No. 1 job," stated Huber, "and because you followed the rules, I'm recognizing you, instead of having to write a letter of condolence."

Perils of Packing Heat

By FLTCM(AW/SW) Jon R. Thompson, Staff, ComLantFlt

Have you ever heard the phrase, "Nothing good can come from this?" In most cases, the phrase predicts things to come. In life, you don't always need a crystal ball to predict the future. You just know that some things, when combined, create a formula for disaster.

Here's an example I recently saw in the message traffic—one that made me wonder what the Sailors were thinking:

A ship received a call from the Norfolk police about an incident involving two E-3s and an E-4, who were found in possession of concealed weapons. One E-3 with a registered 9 mm handgun was issued a citation and returned to the ship. For the E-4, it was his second offense, so he was taken into custody. The other E-3, with two concealed weapons (one with the serial number removed), also was taken into custody. Like the E-4, it was his second offense.

If where you go on liberty is so dangerous you feel a need to carry a gun, my advice is to find a different hangout.

Unless you're hunting, your guns should be left at home—incidentally, "home" means off any military base. Federal rules prohibit you from bringing a weapon onto a base, except in a limited number of cases. *[For details, consult pertinent local instructions, as well as OpNavInst 5580.1A, OpNavInst 5530.13C, OpNavInst 5530.14C, 18 U.S.C. 922, USD (P&R) memo of 27 Nov 02, CNO Washington DC 220949Z Apr 98 (NavAdmin 085/98), and CNO Washington DC 201606Z Oct 04. Pertinent local instructions for Sailors and Marines in the Hampton Roads area are ComNavRegMidLantInst 11015.3 and ComNavRegMidLantInst 11015.2A.—Ed.]*

I can see no good reason why a Sailor ever would need a weapon while on liberty. At best, you can be arrested like the Sailors in the previous example. At worst, you can end up involved in a situation where you actually use the gun(s) and either get shot or shoot someone else. Neither outcome is acceptable.

Combining liberty with a gun is a formula for disaster, and, before you think I'm guilty of not supporting the right to bear arms, let me clarify my position. I'm not arguing a constitutional right. However, as a fleet master chief, I'm in a position where I'm obligated to provide advice about how to conduct yourself on liberty, in the United States, as well as overseas. At no time in my career have I ever seen a case where a Sailor with a concealed weapon came out on the right side of the law.

Everywhere I travel, I meet young Sailors who tell me they want to be treated like adults and that leadership should trust them. I agree—the default action should be to trust you. The only time I start doubting that logic is when I read things like the earlier report. Trust works both ways.

If all hands went on liberty and conducted themselves in a manner that brought credit upon our Navy, I would have nothing to worry about. Unfortunately, some shipmates occasionally erode that trust and confidence. The subsequent "cause and effect" is that leaders sometimes need to be more vocal about what's right and wrong, even if it means overstating the obvious. While it may sound silly to have to say, "Don't carry a gun on liberty," I believe it's sometimes necessary.

Why do I care so much? Because if Sailors are willing to disobey the law, what else are they willing to do? What Navy regulations or orders are they willing to ignore?

Life is about choices. In the Navy, leadership is tasked with ensuring all hands are armed with the necessary information to make sound choices, both at work and at home. Whether you make sound choices is completely up to you; that's the "treating you like an adult" part. But choices have consequences—for you and for others.

When you join the Navy, you enter into an agreement with the service to conduct yourself in a manner that will continue to uphold our longstanding reputation as professionals. No one said living up to that agreement would be easy. I think, depending on your upbringing, some may find this task easier than others.

If where you go on liberty is so dangerous you feel a need to carry a gun, my advice is to find a different hangout.

In my experience, peer pressure can be difficult to manage. Depending on who your friends are and who influences your decisions, you may want to ask yourself some tough questions: What are their motives? Are they encouraging me to succeed or fail? Do they care about me and my career, or do they care about themselves and their career? Do they share my values and goals? If you're drawing blanks—or bad answers—to these questions, I urge you to rethink whom you hang around with. Finding new friends isn't always easy, but following old friends down the wrong path can lead to problems that are extremely difficult to fix.

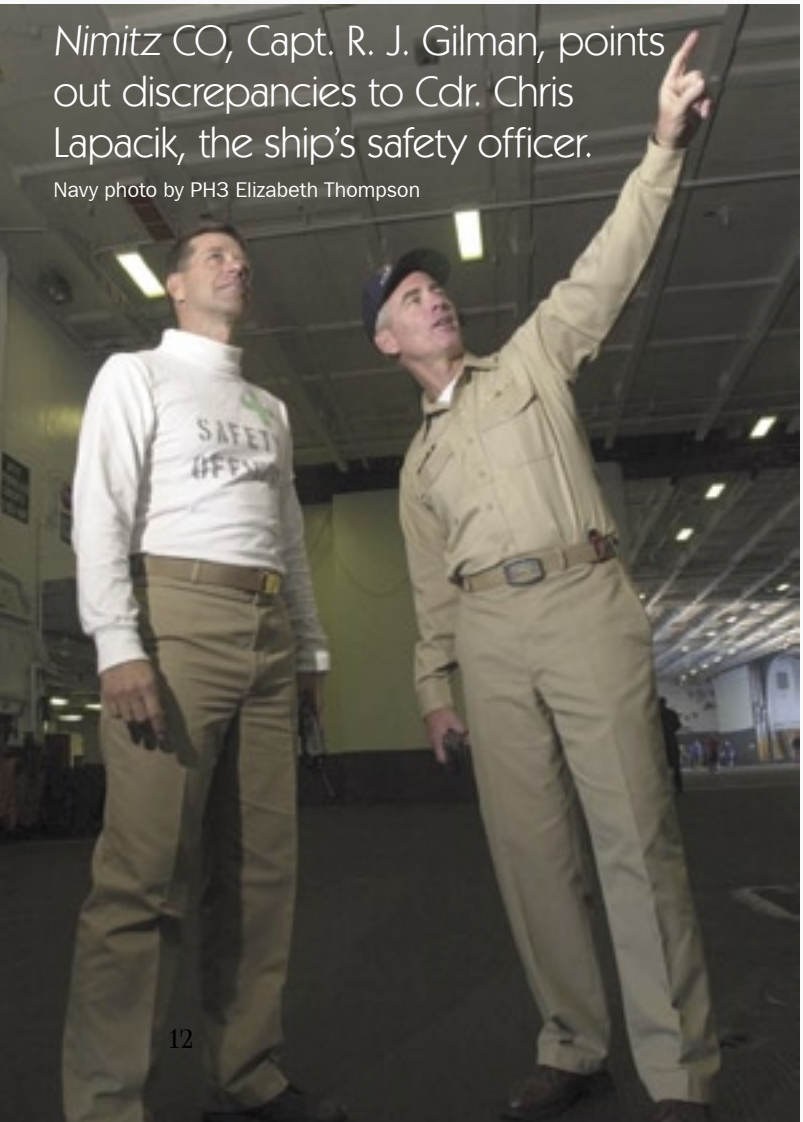
All hands need to do everything possible to keep one another safe, on and off duty. It's bad enough when one Sailor chooses to do something that could harm someone else. It's twice as bad when the same Sailor convinces shipmates to follow his example. Realize that you hold the key to your success. Sometimes, saying "no" is a very good thing, even if it means parting company with a former friend. The choice is yours, and I'm expecting everyone to make the right choice.

From Operational to Industrial—Safely

By JO2(SW) Ahron Arendes,
USS *Nimitz* (CVN-68)

The nuclear-powered aircraft carrier USS *Nimitz* (CVN-68) completed an eight-month combat deployment, safely flying more than 6,500 missions in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. The outstanding safety record of both the ship and its assigned air wing, Carrier Air Wing (CVW) 11, earned them the Admiral H. Flatley Memorial Award for excellence in aviation safety.

Once back from deployment, the *Nimitz* crew faced the challenge of transitioning from an operational environment to the industrial environment.



Nimitz CO, Capt. R. J. Gilman, points out discrepancies to Cdr. Chris Lapacik, the ship's safety officer.

Navy photo by PH3 Elizabeth Thompson

They started a six-month maintenance period known as a planned incremental availability or PIA, one that has been billed as the largest of its kind (pier-side) on the West Coast. The *Nimitz* PIA involved more than 300,000 man-days (2.4 million man-hours) of work, all of which was completed with only 10 recordable injuries, resulting in 23 lost workdays. There were no recorded Class C mishaps (those resulting in five or more lost workdays). "The major mishap-free record speaks for itself," said Cdr. Chris Lapacik, the ship's safety officer at the time.

During the PIA, 10 ship's-force teams worked with approximately 1,200 personnel from Puget Sound Naval Shipyard (PSNS), various "find-fix-train" teams from Southwest Regional Maintenance Center, and more than 30 local contractors.

"I couldn't be happier with the performance of the *Nimitz* team," said then-Commanding Officer, Capt. Robert J. Gilman. "It was quite rewarding to see our Sailors safely working side by side each day with their shipyard counterparts. Best of all, we were able to enjoy a good quality of life during the summer and keep everyone safe."

The crew's concerns during deployment normally ranged from safe handling of JP-5 to avoiding jet blasts and spinning rotors. During the PIA, concerns turned to the potential hazards of doing tagouts, gas-freeing spaces, welding, handling hazardous materials, and removing asbestos.

Lapacik said that a big part of the crew's focus on safety during the maintenance period was a result of the level of importance the commanding officer put on it. "The captain rarely addressed the crew without stressing the importance of safety," he said. "Because the crew wasn't used to dealing with the hazards of an industrial environment, we began briefing all hands on safety precautions and risk avoidance daily," he said.

The ship's safety department helped equip *Nimitz* Sailors with the tools they needed to make the PIA

A civilian contractor drills in catapult alignments.

Navy photo by AN Maebel Tinoko

A USS *Nimitz* Sailor paints impact pads for corrosion control on the flight deck.

Navy photo by AN Maebel Tinoko

a smooth transition. They used TV, the ship's intranet website, and enlisted safety-committee meetings to train the crew on operational risk management and the proper use of personal protective equipment.

Puget Sound Naval Shipyard also provided safety-training support. As noted by Petronilla Dickerson, the environmental, safety and health manager for PSNS, the shipyard provided *Nimitz* with safety and environmental briefings and video presentations that covered trip hazards and fall prevention, proper ventilation in confined spaces, waste and material segregation, equipment-tagout procedures, and proper use of respirators.

"I was very impressed with the level of our employee involvement when it came to identifying safety concerns," said Dickerson. "Our employees were willing to report issues and help correct deficiencies on the spot. Potential risks, such as fires, flooding, and personal injury, involved with a project this large were mitigated by all."

Respiratory health also was a major concern. "During PIA, we had 1,950 new respirator users and more than 3,000 total respirator wearers," acknowledged Lt. Jerry Graven, *Nimitz'* industrial hygiene officer at the time. "The safety petty officers did a lot to make sure their departments and divisions were trained and doing things safely. Going into a PIA, safety is the No. 1 concern."

Aside from the training and emphasis from the CO, daily safety walkthroughs were key elements in keeping everyone safe from harm and helping foster an atmosphere of teamwork. "The ever-present role of *Nimitz'* khaki leadership from each department was vital to our success," said Lapacik. "Our safety folks walked around the ship with the shipyard contractors, recording all discrepancies and compiling them onto a master list."

Graven applauded the safety walkthroughs as vital to the success of the PIA. "When we did them, we recorded the hits and got them corrected quickly," he said, adding, "it kept our Sailors, and their civilian counterparts working efficiently and effectively while on board."

Coordination among the different teams (e.g, such as the tile, safety, and paint teams) were a boost to eliminating discrepancies. Said Lapacik, "Awareness on this ship was higher than what I've ever seen before."

Nimitz *is the flagship for Carrier Strike Group 11. For more info about this story, address e-mail to pao@nimitz.navy.mil.*

For more references on shipyard safety, go to http://safetycenter.navy.mil/afloat/surface/downloads/availabilityguide.doc and http://safetycenter.navy.mil/media/seashore/issues/summer05/pdf/wholemag.pdf.

Some Die... I Get Black Eyes... What Happens to You?

By AT2 Gary Hegg,
USS *Ronald Reagan* (CVN-76)

As a third class petty officer in the Navy, I understood that part of my duty was to set an example for junior personnel—not a bad deal, considering it gave me a chance to show my leadership skills to the chain of command. Unfortunately, I didn't always set the "right" example.

In February 2004, a couple of my buddies had invited me to go to a local bar and grill with them. I decided just to meet them there, instead. After I got to the bar, I received a call from my buddies, saying they had gone to a different place and asking me to join them. While walking to my car, I got mugged and ended up with a black eye.

My first reaction was just to chalk up the incident as bad luck. I'd never been in a similar situation, so I didn't think about what I could have done to prevent it from happening. My chain of command, however, quickly reminded me I probably could have avoided the problem if I had used the buddy system.

For some people, "once is enough," but I was destined to have a repeat performance. In the second incident, I had gone out to a club with a Navy buddy and his lady friend. We had been having a great time when my buddy's friend decided she wanted to go home. She only lived a couple blocks away, so my buddy walked with her.

I realize now that I should have gone along, but I, too, had met a girl that night and didn't want to leave just yet. Besides, before leaving, my buddy had told me he would come back and pick me up since he was the designated driver. The club closed before he returned, though, and I once again ended up outside a bar—all alone, except for the company of my young lady. We were standing there, minding our own business, when a man, who was angry about my being with a girl, confronted me. The result was a second black eye, a second incident report, and another lecture from my chain of command about the value of the buddy system.

While the first incident hadn't involved any loss of work, except for a few hours I spent getting X-rays in ship's medical, I wasn't as lucky the second time around. The black eye required surgery for a broken orbital lobe. I now have a permanent titanium plate for the bottom half of my eye socket.

I thought a lot about these two incidents and came to the conclusion the easy thing to do would be just to quit going out, but I'm no homebody. Everyone has to go out once in a while. What the command had been telling me all along finally made sense. Going on liberty with a buddy just keeps you from being an easy target for drunks, hoodlums and anyone out of sorts.

I now understand that I need to apply risk management to everything I do—both on and off duty. I always need to ask myself, "What can go wrong?" I had been lulled into complacency with an it-won't-happen-to-me attitude. I urge shipmates everywhere, at home and abroad, to police themselves and to realize there is strength in numbers. Don't become the perfect example of a bad situation.

Practicing What He Preaches

By Capt. Mike McKinnon,
CO, Submarine Base, Kings Bay

At 12:06 one early March afternoon, I was driving down Georgia state Highway 15, returning from a TAD trip to Athens, Ga. It was a beautiful day, with perfect visibility and road conditions.

I was traveling the two-lane road (one lane north, one lane south) in my 1996 Saturn, going the posted speed limit of 55 mph, when I saw a white, 80s-model truck coming toward me. Less than a tenth of a mile away, the driver of the truck ran onto the shoulder on his side of the road, overcorrected, and ended up in my southbound lane.

With both vehicles traveling 55 mph, it took about three seconds for this whole event to transpire. The first second, I watched the other driver go onto his shoulder and took my foot off the gas pedal. The next second, the other driver entered my southbound lane, and I immediately started braking hard (fortunately, ABS prevented the brakes from locking up and my losing control). In the third second, I swerved onto my shoulder to avoid a head-on collision because I suspected he would be trying to get back in his lane. There was just one problem: He wasn't moving!

We were lucky enough to pass each other without incident. However, as I continued braking in my shoulder, my car started spinning. Suffice it to say that tires just don't work well when a car is traveling perpendicular to the way a tire is supposed to roll. My car eventually got sideways before reentering the roadway, then flipped almost two times before settling on the northbound shoulder on the driver's side.

Some time back, I had sent a car-cam video to everyone in my command. It was about a guy who fell asleep and then lost control of his car. In that video, the car rolled, and he ended up being thrown into the back seat. Partial ejection from a rear window caused him to be crushed to death. Just as in that video, everything in my front seat got tossed into the back seat, except me! I survived my crash for one reason: I was wearing my seat belt.

Some people say you see your life flash before your eyes when stuff like this happens. I'm confident of what will happen in my afterlife, though, so I didn't see my life pass by in fast-forward. Instead, I saw that video playing over and over in my mind, as I prayed, "Lord, I hope this seat belt does the trick!" I'll let you decide if it was answered prayer, the seat belt, or both that saved me!

At the body shop, I stared at my totaled car while waiting for my wonderful wife to pick me up. I felt fortunate that no increased risk factors (e.g., alcohol, late at night, fatigue, excessive speed, or car in poor condition) had been involved in this incident. It just had happened—sometimes, bad things happen without an explanation. I'd like to think that, because I walk the talk with what we preach to all hands day-in and day-out about driving safety, I was able to walk away from this crash.

Other drivers who saw what happened and stopped at the accident scene to help me out the passenger-side window thought this situation was going to be real ugly. They were amazed I had no cuts or problems walking. Many told me they thought I'd be dead—perhaps that thought is what caused the guy in the truck who ran me off the road just to keep going.

I'll be the first to tell you that I have much to be thankful for—including the fact my car didn't go up in flames (the motor still was running when the car stopped rolling). If you take nothing else from this story, follow my advice, and ***always buckle up!*** I'm living proof that it can and does make a difference.

Navy photo by JO1 Mike Jones

When a Lower Standard

By Lt. Paul B. Durand, MSC, USNR,
Surface Warfare Officer's School Command

Why is the natural tendency in safety to cheat and to cut corners so you can keep going? Is it because of the cost, time constraints, or rushing to get the job done so you can end your workday early?

When we cut corners in the Navy, complacency often sets in afterward, and a feeling that "nothing has happened yet" becomes the norm. How do we overcome this problem? How do we shift our thought processes to accommodate safety in all our work practices?

Regretfully, the loss of the shuttles Columbia and Challenger all too clearly illustrates how these natural tendencies can become disastrous, and the Navy can learn a lot from these events to prevent future catastrophes. Both of these shuttles were vulnerable because of "*normalization of deviance.*"

In this long-term phenomenon, individuals or teams repeatedly accept a lower standard of performance until that lower standard becomes the "norm." Acceptance of the lower standard usually occurs because the individuals or team is under pressure (e.g., from budget or schedule problems) and perceives it will be too difficult to adhere to the higher standard. Their intention may be to revert back to the higher standard when this period of pressure passes. However, by getting away with the deviation, it's likely they will do the same thing when stressful circumstances arise again. Over time, the individuals or team fails to see their actions as deviant.

In the case of the shuttle Challenger, the NASA team had become so comfortable with seeing occasional O-ring damage and getting away with it, the original standard, in which any O-ring damage was defined as intolerable deviance, no longer was considered. Disaster resulted.

Several memos generated by the quality-assurance department that went up the chain had stated that the O-rings were faulty on the solid-booster rockets and should be redesigned. At that time, though, NASA was trying to complete a hectic schedule—maintaining a record shuttle launch every two weeks. Budgetary constraints also existed.

Investigation into the Challenger disaster found that NASA had become complacent and had continued launching shuttles with the "nothing has happened thus far" mentality. They regrettably kept up their tedious and rigorous schedule, and, in 1986, during the launch of STS-51-L, seven astronauts died.

Becomes the "Norm"

When we cut corners in the Navy, complacency often sets in afterward, and a feeling that "nothing has happened yet" becomes the norm.

Those memos clearly predicted what would happen...they were off by 73 seconds...the shuttle probably would blow up on the launch pad, not on its ascent, because of failed O-rings. The NASA team accepted a lower standard of performance on the solid-rocket booster O-rings until that lower standard became the "norm." As a result of that tragedy, NASA added more O-rings and fixed the problem with the solid-booster rockets.

Had the safety culture at NASA changed as a result of Challenger? Seventeen years later, memos were routed several times, stating there was an extreme chance that foam from the external fuel tank might hit the leading edge of the shuttlecraft during liftoff. Again, it was predicted before it happened, and those seven astronauts aboard Columbia unfortunately were doomed as the shuttle disintegrated 40 miles above the earth—just 16 minutes before touchdown.

The Navy should learn from NASA's pitfalls and the definition of *normalization of deviance*. You would think, of all agencies, NASA would have the most stringent of all safety programs. Just think—in both of those two incidents, a failure of a mechanical system was at fault.

Sailors face numerous hazardous jobs every day. For example, they launch and recover aircraft, launch and recover small craft, and participate in underway refuelings, simultaneous vertical and underway replenishments, and tactical maneuverings. They also load stores, assemble munitions, fire weapons, and conduct deep-diving evolutions. Dangers always are lurking in the shadows, making adherence to procedures paramount.

Some common tasks, such as emergency breakaways and rescue operations on flight decks, are practiced so often they become second nature. Less common events, though, require just as much care and forethought in planning and execution. If we went back in time and examined the historical archives, we would find that common, everyday safety procedures were designed and tested because of a tragedy or near-tragedy.

An important point to remember is this: If Sailors do the little things right, like wearing all the fire-fighting ensemble during GQ, they are more apt to respond the same way when a real crisis arises. Let's learn from the space-shuttle disasters and continue stressing safety in everything we do ashore and afloat.

The Day I Used My Face As a Brake Pad

By Ltjg. Michael Paulus,
HC-8 Sea Comp

I was less than two miles into my regular Saturday morning bicycle ride, doing my best Lance Armstrong impersonation. We just had finished warming up and were starting to pick up the pace. I got in the pace line, drafting about 8 to 12 inches behind the cyclist in front of me. I looked down at my bike computer, marveling at how effortless it felt to be riding at the brisk 22-mph pace that we were holding. It was going to be a beautiful day, with the birds chirping and not a cloud in the sky—that was before someone called out, "Branch!"

The problem with that warning was that it came **after** I had watched my front tire run over the branch from a vantage point about three feet above and two feet ahead of my front tire. A slightly altered quote from an Adam Sandler movie ran through my head: "Perhaps that's something you could have told me 10 seconds ago!" Because I was so close to the rider in front of me, I never saw the branch and didn't have a chance to maneuver around it.

The force of the collision vaulted me over my handlebars, and I hit the ground helmet-first on the left side of my head and on my left collarbone. The impact forced my helmet to the right side of my head, thus allowing me to continue sliding down the street on the left side of my face at more than 20 mph. Because we were riding so close to one another, the cyclist behind me ran over my head, further grinding my face into the road. The cyclist behind her ran over the inside of my left knee, grinding it down almost to the kneecap.

I was thankful at least the ambulance driver was nice enough not to run over me. I ended up with a three-quarter-inch gap between the broken ends of my collarbone, a few broken ribs, stitches in my left ear (where part of it almost was ripped off), virtually no skin on my left kneecap, and a severe case of road rash up and down the left side of my body.

Looking back, I did a few things right, but there were several things I could have done better. The best thing I did was to wear my helmet; it undoubtedly saved my life. Without it, I probably would have had a crushed skull, either from the initial impact or from getting run over. Despite the seriousness of the mishap, I didn't receive a concussion, suffer any memory loss, or have any other head injury besides abrasions. The part of the helmet that protects my left ear was broken off.

One thing I could have done to reduce my injuries was to adjust my helmet better. After the wreck, I realized I didn't have it on tight enough. The helmet was buckled, but the impact moved it to the side of my face. If I had had the nape strap adjusted tighter, the helmet most likely would have stayed in place, and my face would have been spared the abuse it received.

For the most part, cycling is a relatively safe activity, as long as you take proper precautions. It can be unforgiving, however, if you make a mistake and are in an accident. Drafting behind another cyclist is a part of the sport and one that certainly adds risk. If you're going to draft, you must stay alert and aware of your surroundings, or be prepared for the consequences of not paying attention.

Now that I've recovered from my accident, I'm riding more than ever, but I also am more vigilant. I always know what lies ahead of me, especially when I'm in a pace line. I check out my helmet's adjustment before every ride. Wearing the right safety gear saved my life, and it might save yours, too.

Here are some thoughts of another avid cyclist, Capt. Nicholas Webster, USN(Ret.), former head of the Naval Safety Center's aeromedical division:

Pace-line riding is enjoyable and a part of high-intensity group riding and racing. Riders in a pace line reduce their workloads by as much as 30 percent, compared to the rider in the lead.

When riding in a pace line, I recommend novice riders keep a distance of one wheel's diameter between their front tire and the rear tire of the rider ahead of them. Your scan in this configuration is intense and should focus down the road ahead of you, not on the next rider's seat or rear tire. Your scan should be far down the road, then moving two or three riders up, then to the rider in front, and then back down the road. You will pick up changes in distance between you and the rider ahead with your peripheral vision and see the road hazards with your central vision.

Please don't suddenly slam on your brakes when in a pace line. You will end up with a pile of angry riders on top of your rear wheel. If the person in front of you slows down suddenly, gently maneuver around the left side of that rider. The increased breeze will help slow you and will keep the pace line behind from plowing into you.

I prefer to ride in groups with people I know. Use a little crew resource management (CRM) and brief the ride and ensure that all use appropriate hand signals. Be kind to those behind, and call and point out road hazards well ahead of time.

Rules to live by

• Pre-ride check your bike. Check tires for damage, then check their pressure. Also, make sure your wheels aren't out of round, and the quick-release levers are secure. Look at brakes for wear, and ensure they are not rubbing. Have a certified bike mechanic check your bike once a year.

• Always wear a helmet that fits well and is secure. If you ever are involved in a crash and the helmet is hit, replace it, even though it may look fine.

• Follow all the rules of the road: Ride with traffic, and ride single file.

• Ride about 1.5 or two feet from the curb. You'll have a little more room to maneuver (and not run off the road) if you experience an unforeseen obstacle.

• When riding in a group, get to know the riding habits of those around you. Give a novice rider a little more room.

• Be courteous—call your turns, stops and road hazards.

• If you have aero bars on your bike, don't use them in a pace line. You'll be unstable and will injure someone.

• If you have to ride at night, wear light reflective clothing. Ride with a bright head light and taillights.

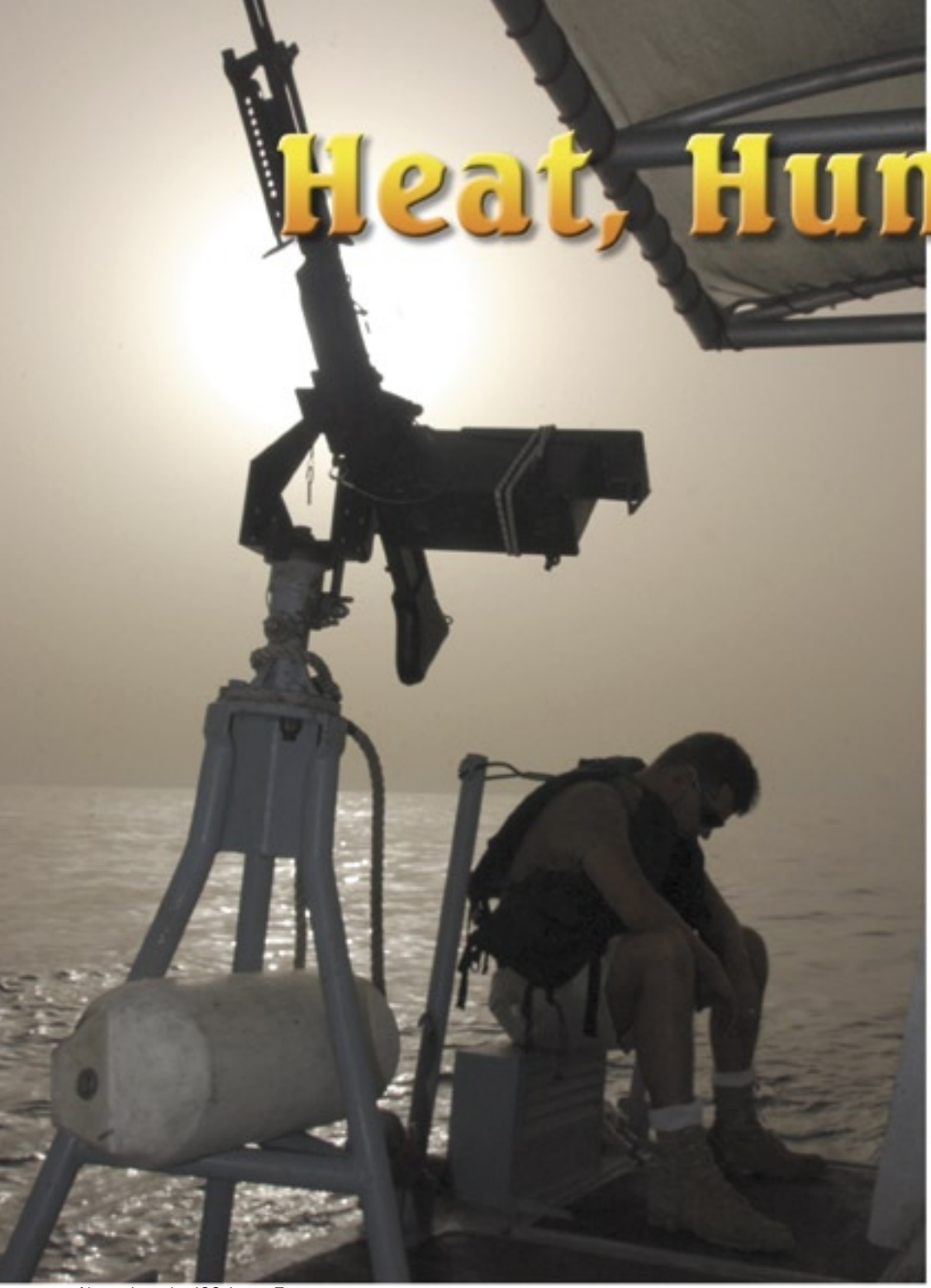
• Don't ride with earplugs or radios. Use your ears to help identify hazards coming up behind you.

• Check behind before swerving to the left. You don't want to become a hood ornament for a car or truck.

• Don't ride on sidewalks or against traffic. Cars and trucks don't expect something moving at 20 mph to be going the wrong way, and you may end up plastered on the side or front of a massive piece of moving steel and plastic. The larger mass always wins.

• You don't drink alcohol and drive, so don't drink and ride.

Heat, Humidity



Navy photo by JO2 Jason Trevett

A Sailor with Inshore Boat Unit 25 takes a break during his 12-hour patrol off the coast of Fujairah in the United Arab Emirates. Temperatures there can reach more than 100 degrees Fahrenheit during the early morning hours.

By Cdr. Martin Plumleigh, Staff, ComLantFlt

● A lance corporal sitting in a warm classroom in June suffers a heatstroke. The temperature outside is about 90 degrees Fahrenheit, with 95 percent humidity. What caused this problem? The victim wasn't accustomed to the environment (he just had arrived from a cooler climate). The air conditioning also wasn't working right.

● Firefighters are training with SCBA equipment in red-flag conditions when one of them goes down with heat exhaustion. After this incident, supervisors were told to check flag conditions before training and to call a timeout anytime they felt the situation was unsafe.

● A Sailor in formation for a uniform inspection begins sweating profusely and feeling lightheaded. He is diagnosed with dehydration. Before this incident occurred, the victim had participated in stretching exercises and calisthenics, then went to chow, with no symptoms of any problem.

As these examples show, heat and humidity can and will take a toll on each of us as we work and enjoy the summer months. The human body has its own mechanisms for dealing with the heat. As the body heats up, our brain puts our cooling

and Our Bodies

system into action. It increases blood flow to the skin and causes our sweat glands to open, allowing liquids to flow out onto the skin. This sweat evaporates from our skin, cooling our blood and tissues.

The brain is our thermostat, and the sweat glands and blood vessels are the air-conditioning plant. If conditions cause one or both of these mechanisms to fail, anything from simple fatigue to death can occur if we don't recognize the problem and do something about it.

The ailments that can result from overexposure to hot, humid environments range from the mild to the severe. They include heat cramps, fainting, heat rash, heat fatigue, heat exhaustion, and heatstroke. Heat cramps are characterized by painful cramping of muscles in the arms, legs and abdomen. They have been attributed to an imbalance of electrolytes in a person's system, which can be caused by too much or too little salt intake but mostly a lack of water replenishment. Drinking at least a cup of water every 15 or 20 minutes will prevent this problem.

Heat rash, sometimes called prickly heat, is the most common complaint in hot, humid locales. It's characterized by red, bumpy patches of skin in areas where sweat doesn't dry well, usually where our clothing tends to bind and trap the sweat. Prickly heat is simple to prevent and cure. Allow your people ample time to rest in a cool, dry area, and discourage them from wearing clothing that is tight and doesn't let the skin breathe. Personal hygiene also is a factor; regular bathing will prevent sweat glands from clogging.

Heat collapse results from the brain not receiving enough oxygen when blood is pumped to and pools in the extremities of the body, causing fainting. Encourage people to keep moving and to acclimate themselves to a new environment slowly. It causes both mental and physical degradation. As people get used to new conditions over the first few days of operations, gradually increase their exposure to the heat and humidity, making sure an ample supply of cool water is available.

Heat exhaustion and heatstroke are the two most dangerous phenomena related to overdoing it in a hot, humid environment. Headache, nausea, vertigo, weakness, thirst, and giddiness characterize heat exhaustion. Supervisors should watch people closely and remove anyone showing these symptoms. Heat exhaustion dissipates rapidly once the person is in a cool environment, takes some cool fluids (non-alcoholic), and rests.

It's important not to take the symptoms of heat exhaustion lightly because they are similar to those for heatstroke, which is extremely dangerous if not treated immediately. Heatstroke is a medical emergency characterized by confusion, irrational behavior, loss of consciousness, lack of sweating, hot and dry skin, and an elevated body temperature (105 degrees Fahrenheit or more). If someone shows these symptoms, get medical help immediately and place the person in a cool environment. Also remove the outer layer of clothing. Wet the exposed skin and fan it to improve evaporation and cooling. Replace lost fluids immediately.

In all of these cases, the affected person's overall health and fitness will be a factor that contributes to their susceptibility. People who just have arrived in a hot, humid environment should take three or four days to get used to it, then gradually increase exposure time. Easy access to cool water is a must. Over a day, the human body can put out as much as two or three gallons of sweat, and these fluids must be replaced. To ensure this happens, drink seven ounces of water an hour. You may have to increase this amount during periods of extra heavy activity.

Participating in athletics and drinking alcohol are examples of activities that can increase our need to take in extra amounts of water. Always make sure plenty of non-alcoholic fluids are available at summer parties and athletic events. For work, it's a good idea to put out extra water coolers. For athletics, observe indicators put out by the base to identify the severity of the heat factor for that day. A black flag usually indicates that athletics should be curtailed because of excessively high temperature and humidity.

Each of us should be our own monitor. Know your limits, take it easy, and give yourself time to get used to a new environment. Take in plenty of fluids, and make sure people around you do the same. Above all, know when it's time to get some relief from the heat.

The author was assigned to VAW-123 when he wrote this article.

"Drink If You Must... Just Don't Drive"

By Dan Steber,
Naval Safety Center

On Friday night, Jan. 24, 1997, Bob Walsh was taking Kaye, his wife of five years, to dinner. They asked Kaye's 32-year-old daughter, Robin *[a resident of the household for the past three years]*, to join them, but she declined, saying she and her friend, Denise, had plans and would grab something to eat later. "I told her to be careful, that I loved her, and I would see her in the morning," said Kaye.

At 3:45 a.m., however, Kaye awakened for no apparent reason. "I remember it like it was yesterday," she said. "It was a Saturday morning, and it had rained."

Kaye made a pot of coffee and looked out the living-room window to see if Robin's car was parked in the driveway—it wasn't. She then looked for her daughter's car keys on the counter, but they weren't there. "Robin always was good about letting us know if she didn't plan to come home because she knew we would worry," Kaye noted. "Because she hadn't called, I began to worry."

At 4:45 a.m., Kaye's worst fears were realized when the doorbell rang. "I opened the door, and there stood a police officer and a police chaplain," she explained. "I knew immediately that Robin was dead. The police officer asked me to get my husband up before he told me anything. In the darkness of our living room, he then said, 'There has been an accident, and Robin didn't make it. She was killed by a drunk driver.'"

That news sent shock waves through Kaye. "I was numb, I couldn't think, and I felt like throwing up," she said. "All I could do was shake; amazingly, I couldn't cry." Kaye kept thinking they had made a mistake, even after the police officer handed Robin's purse and car keys to her. She then asked about Denise and learned she was in intensive care at the hospital. Robin also was at the hospital—in the morgue. "I couldn't comprehend the word 'morgue' in relationship to Robin," Kaye said.

At this point, Kaye started questioning the police officer about her daughter's offender. She was told his name, age and BAC, which still was 0.16 nearly two hours after the crash. She asked if it was his first offense. The officer explained it was his third. He went on to tell Kaye that the crash occurred at 1:35 a.m. and that there were two witnesses who said the offender earlier had been behind them for quite a spell. They were fearful he was going to hit them. Because they had a small child in the backseat, they kept a close eye on him, trying to stay out of his way. They only could watch helplessly as he ran a red light and hit Robin's car.

There were no skid marks to indicate he tried to stop. The crash tore Robin's car door off and sent her car sliding 150 feet sideways. Denise's head knocked out all the glass in the passenger door. Meanwhile, the steering wheel was shoved to the middle of the dash. Both Robin and Denise had their seat belts buckled.

After the police officer and chaplain left, Kaye asked her husband to go to the hospital and make sure it was Robin. She handed Bob a flower that had been kept in the refrigerator. The flower was from a wedding reception Robin had attended the week before. Kaye told Bob to "put it in her hand, if it really is her." He came home without the flower but had a white bag containing Robin's clothes that had been cut off her at the scene. "He wouldn't let me go through the bag," said Kaye. "He instead put the bag in the garage and told me I needed to do that later."

There's a little irony in this story. One evening at dinner, a couple months before Robin's death, she told Kaye and Bob she wanted to be a donor. "I said I didn't want to hear any of that," Kaye noted, "but I did tell her to have it designated on her driver's

Navy photo by Fred Klinkenberger

Kaye Walsh tells an audience the story of how a drunk driver killed her daughter.

license. She didn't do it, and I didn't think about it again until Life Net called after Bob returned from the hospital. They asked if I would be willing to let Robin be a donor. Remembering the conversation I had had with her, I agreed."

Finally realizing that her beautiful Robin was dead, Kaye began to cry—actually, she wailed. As she described, "I couldn't believe the sound that came from my mouth. What happens is that you begin to have rapid flashbacks. I remembered the day she was born, then my mind jumped to high school, then back to her early childhood and her first day of school, her first date, the first time she drove a car, then something she said to me or something I said to her. I even thought about the first time she tied her shoes alone and the expression of pride on her face. It doesn't stop. Her whole life was flashing before my eyes, and it was yelling at me. Your body, nor your mind, rests—this went on for almost a year afterward.

"I still have times, even though it's more than eight years later, when my mind goes to those special places, especially when Robin's birthday approaches, or at Christmas, on Mother's Day, and the anniversary of her death. I miss her terribly. I've had to adjust to life without her, and that's one of the most traumatic ordeals that ever could happen to a parent. I never could have prepared for something like this."

Kaye and Bob made funeral arrangements in Illinois, so Robin could be buried alongside three generations of her ancestors. When they walked into the funeral home for the wake, Kaye's wailing started anew, and she began to sob uncontrollably. "There was Robin, dressed in her classy suit, with her hands crossed and her eyes closed," said Kaye. "I kissed her hard, cold face; touched her hard, cold hand; and asked God to please carry me because I couldn't do this on my own."

A few days after returning from the funeral, Kaye and Bob went to visit Denise, who looked like "someone had set off a time bomb in her face." She had severe head injuries, a broken collarbone, a back injury, and still had glass stuck in her head and face. Because of her back injury, she couldn't walk. Denise told Kaye she felt very guilty, which prompted Kaye to ask why, but Denise couldn't give her a specific answer. Several months later, friends of Robin and Denise told Kaye the answer. They explained that Robin *[the designated driver that fateful night]* had

Navy photo by Fred Klinkenberger

Bob Walsh displays the clothes Robin Gustafson was wearing the night she died.

Here's what remained of Robin Gustafson's car (see inset for photo of victim).

wanted to leave a party a couple of hours earlier but that Denise wasn't ready to go. Robin stayed to make sure Denise got home OK—"that's the kind of person she was," acknowledged Kaye.

When the drunk driver that night came to trial, Kaye was sure he would get a slap on the wrist. That was the normal sentence at that time for DUI manslaughter convictions. However, the judge sentenced him to eight years in prison, which, as Kaye and Bob were told, was the stiffest sentence to date for a single DUI fatality. The judge suspended four of those years, an unwise decision, as later events proved. The drunk driver was released on unsupervised probation and, five months later, again was convicted of DUI—his fourth offense. Kaye didn't learn about this conviction, though, until nearly two years after the fact, while searching the state-court website city-by-city.

With the help of a Mothers Against Drunk Driving advocate, Kaye learned the drunk driver had been charged as a first-time offender—his record "magically" had disappeared from all law-enforcement databases. To make matters worse, his manslaughter conviction never had been sent to DMV after his 1997 conviction. Kaye brought this information to the attention of the commonwealth attorney's office, and the offender subsequently was convicted of violating probation in January 2003—another felony. He had to return to prison to serve the remaining four years of his original sentence and wasn't scheduled to be released again until April 2006.

As Kaye remarked, "I couldn't let my daughter's killer do it to another person. The system had a hole in it, and I couldn't stand by and let this person go free." She's not done with him yet, either. "I'm going to be his shadow," she assured.

While neither Kaye, nor Bob, ever can do anything to bring Robin back, they are doing something to help prevent others from ever having to endure the same kind of grief. They carry their riveting, life-changing story to monthly SARP (Substance Abuse and Rehabilitation Program) Norfolk meetings and to local commands' safety stand-downs. The couple's presentation starts with a drunk-driver's victim board in front of the audience, a MADD banner covering a table, and a bag sitting unattended on a seat. Kaye and Bob alternate at the microphone. At one point, Bob walks over to the bag, which contains the clothes that were cut off Robin that night. He removes the items one at a time, which usually brings gasps from the audience.

"We don't want anyone to go through the pain and suffering we did," Bob tells the audience. "A mishap doesn't affect only the offender or the victim; it affects the families and friends of everyone involved. This sorrow is easy to prevent: Drink if you must... just don't drive."

Visit the Naval Safety Center website at www.safetycenter.navy.mil for more information on traffic safety and impaired driving. And visit the Speaker's Bureau to contact people like Kaye and Bob who are willing to help your traffic and off-duty safety stand-downs.

Remember Charlie:
Motivational Speaker Visits *Nimitz*

By JO2 Kris Allen,
USS *Nimitz* (CVN-68) Public Affairs

In 1980, Charlie Morecraft was a petroleum-refinery employee at Exxon Corp. in Linden, N.J. He had more than 15 years' experience on the job and was familiar with all the safety regulations but admitted he frequently found shortcuts so he could complete his tasks more quickly.

Charlie's experience lulled him into a false sense of security until, one day, fate caught up with him. He ignored a few safety regulations and was trapped in an explosion that burned almost half his body and nearly killed him. After years of hospitalization, surgeries, physical therapy, and a lot of introspection, Charlie decided to tell the world about the importance of following safety rules.

"When I looked around the fo'c's'le, you could tell by the expressions on people's faces they were mesmerized by his presentation," said Lt. Ted Benchoff, the industrial-hygiene officer aboard USS *Nimitz*, during Charlie's September 2005 visit.

Benchoff explained he had been looking for ways to spice up safety briefs after the last stand-down and remembered Charlie from a presentation he had seen while working for a civilian company. He found a website and sent an e-mail, asking how to get a videotape of the presentation. Charlie responded by offering to waive all his speaking fees and to pay for his own plane tickets just to have a chance to speak directly to the crew.

Charlie said it was his way of showing support for the troops. "I lost a lot of friends in the Vietnam War. I was drafted and wanted to go in the Navy but failed the physical, so I couldn't go," he said. "From that time on, I felt guilty about not being able to serve my country, so when this opportunity came up, I thought it was time for me to pay back."

Charlie shared everything about his experience, from what led up to the accident, through all the operations and therapy afterward, to the horrible effects the accident had on his own family. Even though he relives the experience in every presentation, he feels it's worth it. "I love speaking to you guys. I love that something I say might make a difference," he added.

Navy photo by PHAN Gretchen Cloonan

Charlie Morecraft holds up a burn mask like the one burn victims have to wear for one year to promote nerve-ending healing and to prevent scarring.

Benchoff said the most important message that Charlie had to make is that everybody has to be responsible for following the rules and procedures and for using the safety equipment they're required to wear. The main message he wanted to bring to the crew is that safety is personal: "It's about going home at the end of the day and kissing your spouse and hugging your kids."

Charlie Morecraft today is chief executive officer of Phoenix Safety Management, Inc. To schedule one of his presentations, contact Tracey Olnick at 1 (800) 783-0796.

Nimitz *serves as flagship for Carrier Strike Group 11 and was supporting maritime security operations in the Arabian Gulf at the time the author wrote this story.*

Navy photo courtesy USS *Nimitz* (CVN-68) photo lab

HEAVY ON THE THROTTLE,

[The author is a 21-year-old Marine Corps corporal who asked to remain anonymous.]

It was a typical Saturday morning in Oceanside, Calif., when my buddy swung by my apartment on his Kawasaki ZX-7R. He wanted me to join him for a ride around town on our motorcycles.

I still was half asleep as I stumbled over to the door and started chatting with him. When he finally had convinced me to come along, I donned a pair of blue jeans and a long-sleeved T-shirt. On my way out the door, I grabbed my leather motorcycle boots, gloves and, of course, my helmet. However, I

DEEP INTO TROUBLE

left my leather jacket behind. The morning California sun was warming things up quickly, and I knew I'd be uncomfortable in no time if I wore that jacket. Besides, we only were going for a short ride.

We started out just cruising around, enjoying the weather, scenery and, of course, our motorcycles. When we got to where the highway crossed an interstate, we pulled over at a gas station to top off our tanks and to figure out what we wanted to do next. Instead of turning around and heading home, we decided to make a day of it; we were going to take the interstate south toward San Diego.

Shortly after we hit the interstate, I suddenly had a strong urge to open up the throttle on my Aprilia RSV 1000 Mille—even though traffic was fairly heavy. At more than 100 mph, I was cutting and weaving in and out of traffic and leaving my friend in the dust. I was picking my way through a cluster of vehicles when I glanced in the next lane over and about 25 feet ahead and saw a highway-patrol car. A check of my speedometer sent a sobering thought flashing through my head, "I'm going to blow right by this cop while doing 150 mph."

My first instinct was to slow down, so I pulled in the clutch lever and applied the front brake. I guess I pulled too hard because, in the next instant, I felt my bike slip left. Then, I was on my back, sliding down the asphalt. "Oh no, I'm not wearing my leather jacket!" I thought. "This is going to hurt badly!"

After sliding for what seemed like an eternity, I came to a tumbling stop and instantly was on my feet, walking to the side of the freeway. I remember thinking to myself at the time, "Oh my God, I'm walking!" I then turned my attention to the traffic that had been behind me. Cars in all four lanes were stopped a couple hundred feet from where I had stopped sliding. The drivers thankfully had seen what was happening and had time to slow down.

The highway patrolman I had seen had pulled over, with the car's lights flashing, so I started walking toward him. It was about this time, as he climbed out of his car and started running toward me, that I felt my first pain. I looked down and saw my shirt was hanging off me by only a few threads, and half my jeans were gone. My injuries included two sprained ankles, two bruised heels, back contusions, and considerable road rash, especially on my knees, elbows, my shoulders, and my hands.

Then, I was on my back, sliding down the asphalt. "Oh no, I'm not wearing my leather jacket!" I thought. "This is going to hurt badly!"

The thin, nylon-mesh, "summer" gloves I was wearing hadn't held up very good. If I had been wearing my leather jacket and full leather gloves, most of the road rash on my upper body would have been reduced or perhaps eliminated. Thankfully, my helmet had worked as designed, and I didn't have any head injuries.

I got into an ambulance but not before the patrolman had lectured me on how lucky I was to be alive. Once I reached the local emergency room, doctors quickly cleaned and treated my wounds, which hurt a lot more at that point than when I had incurred them. I was bandaged up and released six hours later.

I know I'm lucky to be alive today and for having just minor injuries; unfortunately, I wasn't as lucky with the patrolman. He cited me for speeding faster than 100 mph, which will translate into a hefty fine once I settle at a future court date. On top of that, my insurance rates likely will increase, and, of course, there's the matter of the damage I did to my motorcycle. That's going to cost me about $11,000 for parts—excluding maintenance costs and shop space.

It's fun and thrilling to fly down the road at a high rate of speed on a motorcycle, but, take it from me, it's just not worth the consequences. I know—I learned the hard way.

A Man With Purpose

By ATCS(AW) John Dunlap,
VFA-151

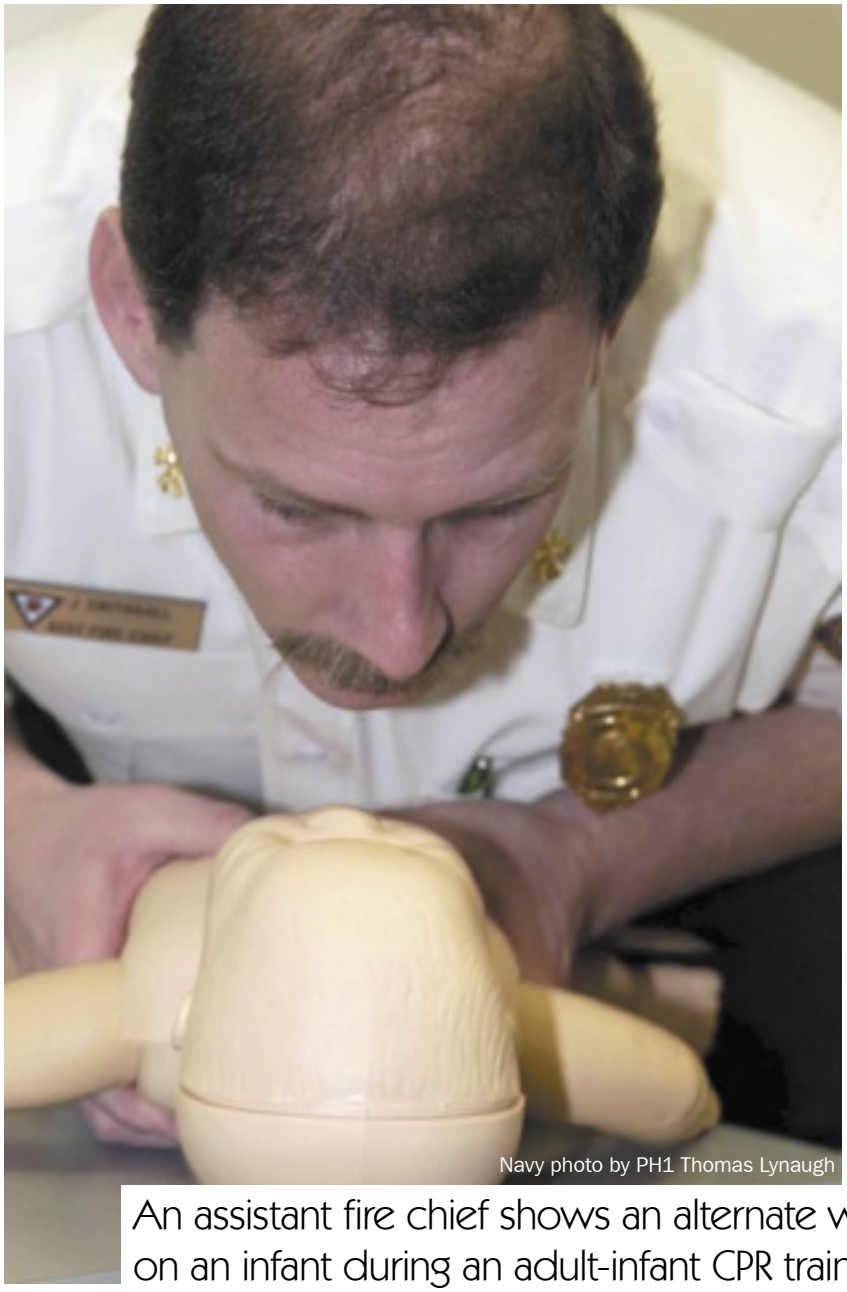
A man crouches over his first child, who isn't breathing. She is only 18 months old, and he knows if he doesn't perform CPR properly, she will end up biologically dead.

This man has purpose—his daughter is dying before his eyes, and he knows that he's the only one who can save her. Having taught CPR for six years, he's fully aware of the distinction between infant and child procedures. However, the gray area in between is where he finds himself at the moment. CPR is used to save lives, and, for the first time, this man understands why he volunteers to teach the procedures.

Time slows down. The man doesn't feel the neighbor's little girl pulling on his hair because she thinks he is tickling his daughter. He hears someone making a 911 call but doesn't really pay attention. Soon, a police officer heralds his arrival by screeching his brakes. After radioing dispatch that he needs an ambulance code 3, the police officer tells the crowd around the man and his daughter to move back. The man hears all this but ignores it because he has only one purpose: to get his daughter breathing on her own. Just as the ambulance arrives, his daughter finally starts breathing and coming around.

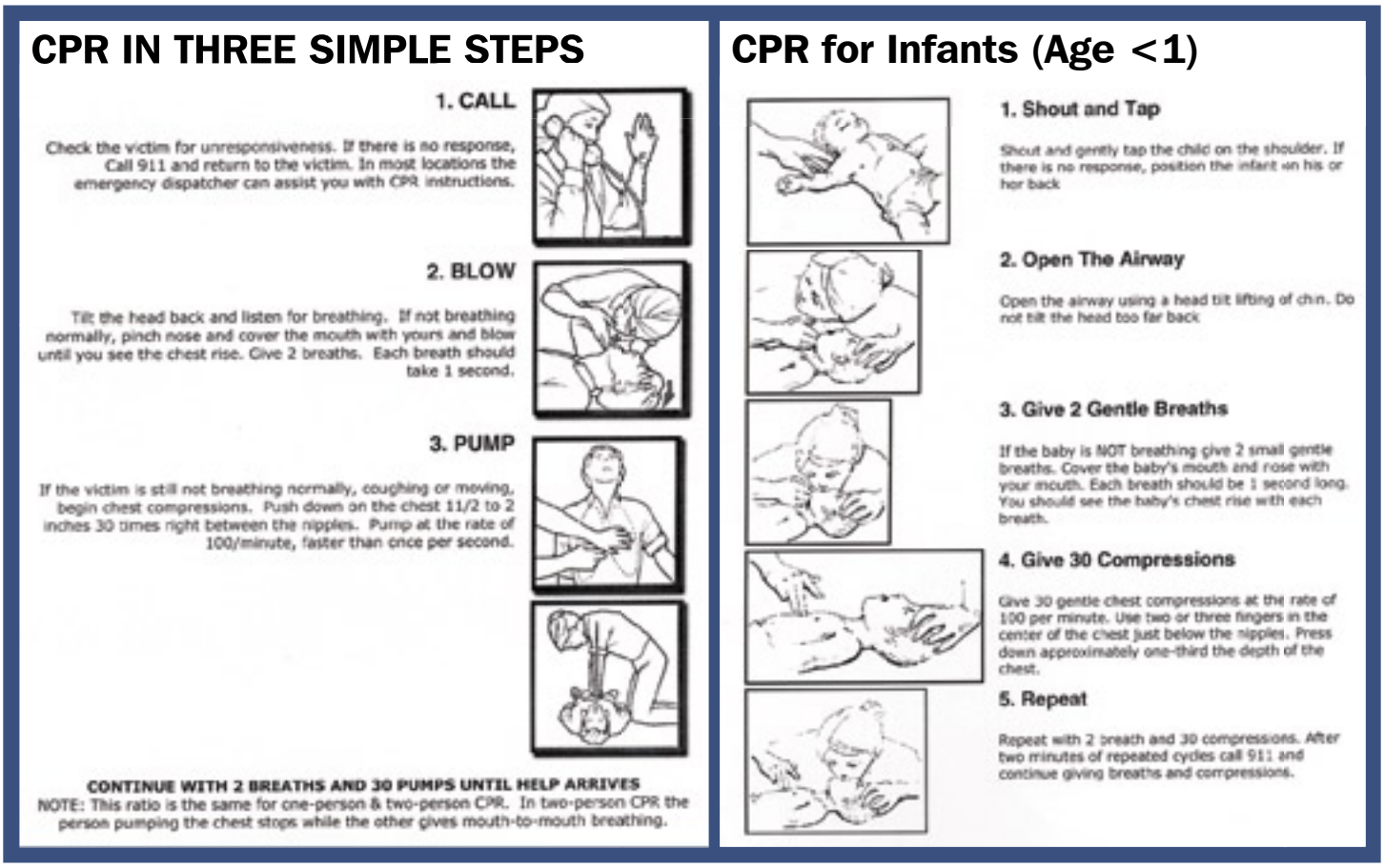
Many neighbors afterward said they didn't know if they could have done the same thing if their child had been the one on the ground. My concept of "purpose" is in my actions. Some will say they have purpose; however, when you look at their actions, you can tell they actually lack purpose. During that time my daughter was lying on the ground, not breathing, I didn't feel anything—I had a purpose and was focused on it.

Now 17 years old and 6 feet tall, my daughter is doing extremely well as she starts her senior year in high school. However, I still get the shakes when I think about what could have happened that day as she lay on the ground.



Navy photo by PH1 Thomas Lynaugh

An assistant fire chief shows an alternate way to perform compressions on an infant during an adult-infant CPR training class.



Maybe my purpose continues today—in the hope that someone who reads this story might realize he or she needs to take a CPR class. You never know whose life you may save.

"Though there are no reliable national statistics on cardiopulmonary resuscitation, studies in specific communities consistently have shown benefits from early CPR and defibrillation. When administered within the first three to five minutes after someone's collapse and coupled with early advanced care, long-term survival rates often exceed 50 percent. The value of early CPR is that it can 'buy time' by maintaining some blood flow to the heart and brain during cardiac arrest. Considering that sudden cardiac death from heart attack occurs more than 917 times per day in the United States, don't you want to know what to do if the person walking beside you collapses?"—American Heart Association (www.americanheart.org)

The Fourth of July: Hamburgers, Hot Dogs, And an Hour of Hell

By LtCol. Ed Billman, USAF(Ret.)

I always wear a seat belt when I'm in a moving vehicle; it doesn't matter whether I'm driving or riding. On rare occasions, when my wife is driving, I'll recline my seat and take a snooze, but I know the seat belt won't do its job right if I'm in that position during a crash. Because of the worry that I'll slide forward and down, probably strangling myself, I usually give up after a couple of minutes and return the seat upright.

Why am I such a seat-belt fan? It's because of something horrible I witnessed when I was 13. Our family had spent the Fourth of July at my grandparents' home in south Dallas. It was late afternoon, around dusk, and we were returning home along Loop 12, a major four-lane, divided road around Dallas. There was heavy holiday traffic, with people driving 70 mph (before speed limits changed to 55, then back again).

About a quarter-mile ahead, we saw an accident. Cars were moving onto the shoulder and slowing to avoid the crash; we did the same. As we passed the scene, we realized the accident just had happened. No police, firefighters or emergency personnel had arrived yet. Passersby were running to the wrecked cars to help the injured—and there were plenty.

Navy photo by JO3 Ryan C. McGinley

I could see at least four cars involved. I remember seeing shoes on the pavement, along with a hat and, of course, car debris. Dad stopped on the shoulder, and he and I jumped out, hoping to help. Meanwhile, Mom and my little brother stayed in the car. Dad and I ran toward the closest cars, where dust and smoke were heavy in the air. People were shouting and screaming—it was a hellish, surreal sight.

Before we could get to the nearest vehicle, we heard the sound of an approaching car. Someone yelled, "Look out!" I turned around just in time to see a small car coming over the crest of a hill behind us. It was going too fast to stop and probably didn't even see the stopped traffic ahead. Dad and I jumped back just in time to watch the small car crash no more than 10 feet away.

In an awful instant, and with a force and gnashing bang I never will forget, the small car smashed into the back of the vehicle in front of us. The next few seconds were pure chaos, with people tumbling and yelling. Adding to the confusion was the horn on the small car, which went off during the crash and kept blaring.

Dad and I ran to the small car and found fluids coming from underneath. I smelled gasoline. A young woman, about 30, was in the driver's seat and conscious. Dad and another man pulled her out and took her to a grassy area where we could administer first aid. The steering wheel and dashboard had done to her what you always hear they do, so I won't go into details. Let's just say she was lucky to be alive, and, given the half-dollar-size hole in her forehead, we were amazed she was coherent. Maybe it would have been easier for her—and everyone—if she had been unconscious.

"Where's my baby? Where's my baby?" she kept screaming as we tried to calm her and treat her injuries. I looked at the car and saw the windshield was gone; no one else was inside.

It was getting dark when the faint sounds of sirens signaled that help was approaching. Shock, loss of blood, and injuries were slowing down the woman. Her pleas about her baby now were just moans.

About this time, a new sound captured my attention, and I swung my head around to see a man with a tire tool banging wildly at the engine compartment of the woman's car. The hood had opened during the crash, and he was trying to silence the horn. He was frantic, with tears streaming down his face, repeatedly yelling, "Shut up, dammit! Shut up!"

By now, firefighters, police and emergency personnel were everywhere. We all felt comforted, even though the scene was loud, dark and ghastly. Then, a firefighter came by with something wrapped in his coat. He signaled for one of the medical technicians working on the woman. The technician went over, and the two talked briefly. The firefighter opened his coat

Photo by Jimmy Deaton

Unlike the young woman and baby in this story, these victims appear to have been "buckled up" when their crash occurred.

a little and slowly shook his head, then the technician returned to the woman. She still was asking about her baby.

The technician said, "Lady, your baby is OK. You're going to be fine, too." Then he stood and motioned to me. I went to him, and he said, "I'm going for a gurney. She's pretty bad. She needs to calm down. Tell her that her baby is OK."

I challenged him, "Was that her baby the firefighter had?"

"Yes," he replied. "He found the baby 100 yards down the highway." He paused, then added, "Tell her the baby is OK. It's important for her."

Stunned and sluggish, I walked back to Dad, the woman, and the others. A combination of the scene, the shock, and the news I just had heard made me numb. For the next few minutes, Dad and I, along with everyone else, repeatedly lied to the woman, trying to convince her that her dead baby was OK, and everything was going to be all right. Then, an ambulance whisked her away. Tired and still in shock, we, too, left. It was a quiet, strange ride home.

A base firefighter inspects the installation of a child's safety seat.

I checked the newspaper the next day and found the story: a dozen people hurt, some hit by the fast-approaching car. Four people had died that evening, including three adults and one 18-month-old baby. None of them had been wearing seat belts—not unusual for the 60s. The paper said the child's mother was in serious condition. And I don't know how they knew, but the story said the child had been standing on the front seat at the time of the crash.

That scene really traumatized me. I was consumed with it for days, bothered by it for weeks, and still often recall it. So many images from that day are burned permanently into my mind. In a sad way, I'm thankful for the life-and-death lesson. What I have in return for that hour in hell is the certainty that anyone I care about will wear a seat belt as long as I'm in the car, too.

Now that I have small children, I'm probably a bit over-protective about child seats and safety. My kids complain that they can't travel in the front seat. "So-and-so does," they tell me. On occasion, we take friends' kids with us, and I insist they sit at the sides where they can wear a shoulder strap. They sometimes whine that they get to sit in the middle of the seat when they're with their folks. I simply say, "Not in my car," and that's the end of it.

One thing that enrages me is the too-frequent scene of children under 5 years of age climbing around unrestrained in the family car while mom runs errands around town or dad barrels down the interstate. My heart aches for those kids, who are oblivious to their danger, helpless to care for themselves, and content their parents always will be around to protect them. What a horrible betrayal of trust! I think to myself, "What is wrong with those parents? Where have they been the last 30 years?"

I've replayed that Fourth of July scene in my head dozens of times. I wish there were a way I could plant that experience in the heads of all those irresponsible parents I see on the road. They probably would pull over and hug their kids for an hour, and they probably never again would drive with their kids unrestrained.

Reprinted with permission from the July 2000 issue of Torch, *the official safety magazine of Air Education and Training Command, Randolph Air Force Base, Texas, where the author was assigned at the time he wrote this article. He currently is Civil Air Patrol Group commander for the southern portion of the Texas Wing, where he commands 11 squadrons and 300 volunteers.*

What Can a Few More Laps Hurt?

By AME1(AW/NAC) Lance Scott, VQ-4

Photo by LCpl. Ryan Walker, USMC

Assignment in Oklahoma means I have a choice of several local motocross tracks. One beautiful Sunday morning, my friend, Josh, and I unloaded our bikes and got ready for a perfect day of riding.

The track had been groomed, and the water truck was watering a few dry spots. The faces of the jumps were nice and sharp, and the berms were loamy. The only thing missing on the track was me.

After the water truck had pulled off the track, every rider was cleared to enter. I finished putting on all my protective gear (motocross boots, pants, jersey, gloves, helmet, and goggles) and was ready to hit the track. I took a few laps to get the feel of it, then decided to pick up the pace. I started taking some of the jumps—nothing I wasn't accustomed to—the occasional tabletop and a few of the doubles.

I rode for a few hours before taking a break for water and a bite to eat. It was as another satisfying day at the track was coming to an end that my decision-making faltered, and I decided to take a few more laps. I already was tired from riding all day and felt a little sore from the workout.

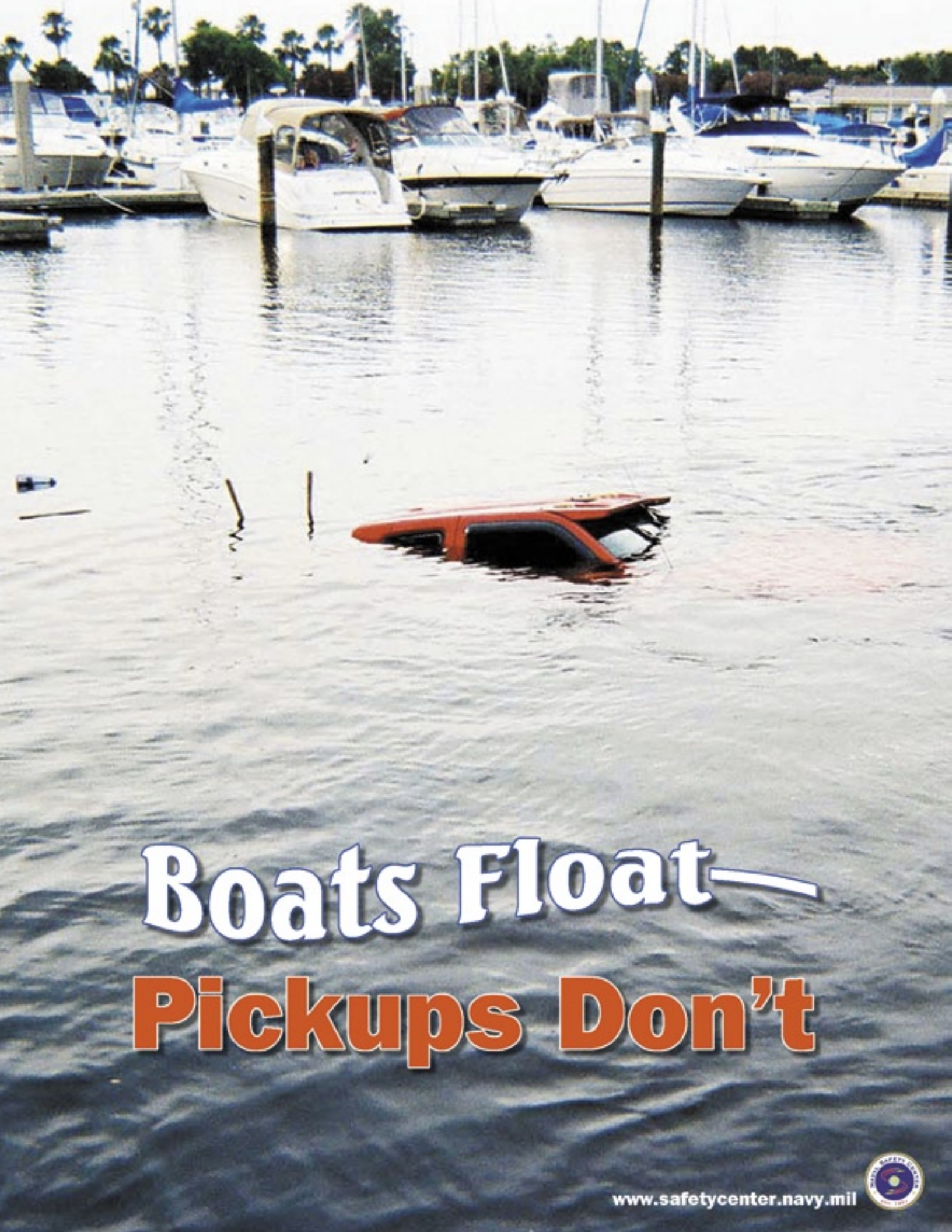
While coming out of a turn, I shifted up to third gear, grabbed a handful of throttle, and twisted it so I would have enough speed to clear a double and not "case it" (land on the peak of the second jump). My plan didn't work out as I had hoped. I came up the face of the jump with the throttle pinned, causing me to inadvertently wheelie out about 12 to 15 feet in the air. At that moment, I realized there was no way I could save the landing. I decided to bail off the bike and to take my chances with the ground.

I landed straight on my left leg. All the forward momentum I carried caused me to tumble forward, head over heels. I finally rolled to a stop and crawled off the track. The rider behind me stopped to ask if I was OK. I said I was, but my left ankle was throbbing. Josh rode over and asked what happened. I briefly told him the story, then he went over and checked the damage to my bike—it looked promising, with the exception of the mangled handlebars.

We rode back to the truck and headed to an emergency room for what turned out to be a three-hour visit, with multiple X-rays. I was discharged later that day with a severely sprained ankle and broken big toe. When I returned to work on Monday, I was downed from flying for a month and bore the brunt of some jokes from my fellow flight engineers.

What can we all learn from this incident? First, always wear the proper safety equipment. Had I not been wearing mine, the results would have been a lot worse. Second, don't ride above your limitations. Know what you're capable of doing and stop there. Finally, when you're tired, call it a day—there's always next weekend. Make risk management an integral part of everything you do—at work or at play.

As I read this article, I couldn't help wondering if the rider had completed the required motorcycle-safety course before riding his bike. Dirt-bike riders often fall through the cracks because their bikes usually don't have to be registered, but that fact doesn't excuse them of their responsibility.—Chuck Roberts, head, traffic & off-duty recreation safety division



www.safetycenter.navy.mil